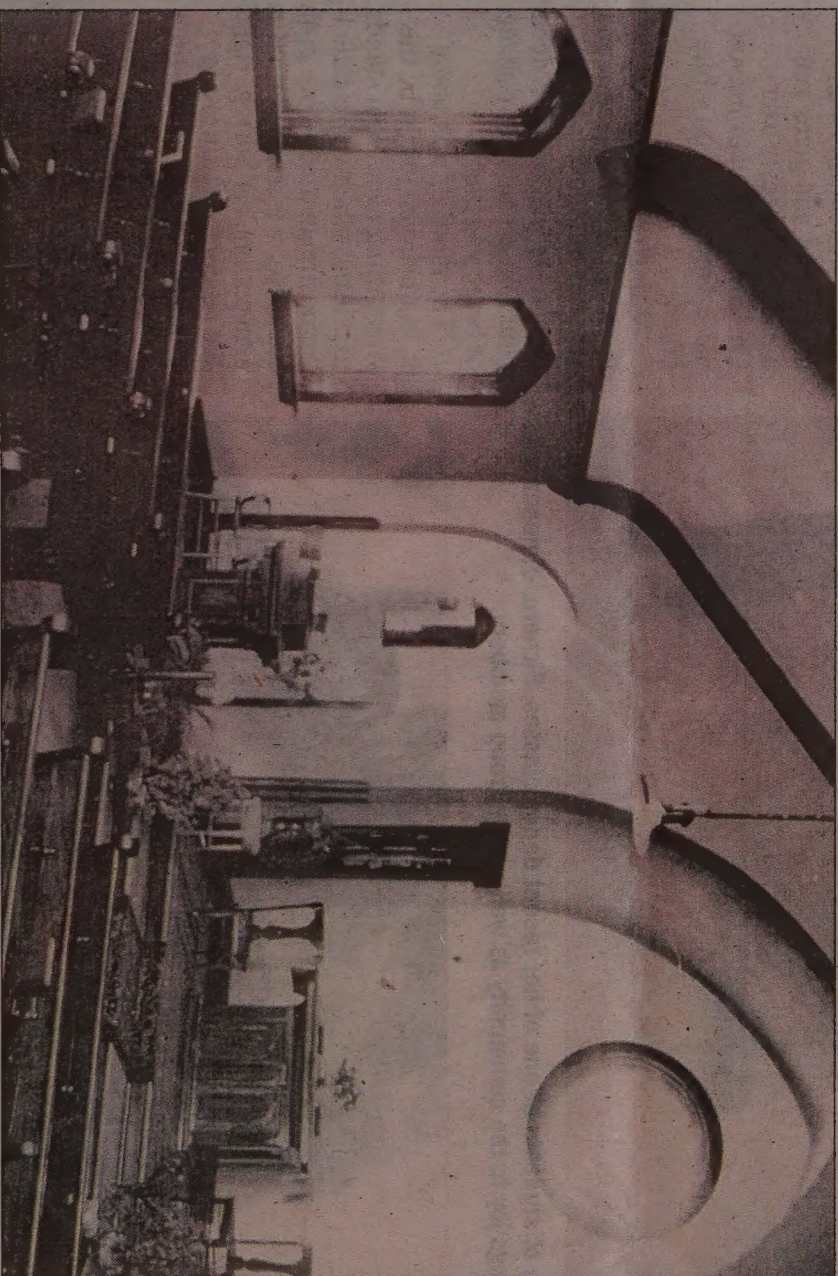


BHHC 3-9

REMEMBER WHEN ...



First Lutheran Church Interior, Belen, c. 1915.

Photo courtesy of the Los Lunas Museum of Heritage and Arts

Days gone by

Courtesy of the Valencia County Historical Society

(News items collected from the News-Bulletin and other nearby newspapers.)

Jan. 25, 1908

Las Vegas has a school principal who has evidently mistaken his calling. According to the Las Vegas Optic's allusions to his performances, he was not cut out for a public-school teacher in a civilized community, but for prominent membership in a tribe of South Sea island savages. *Socorro Chieftain*

Jan. 1, 1920

The Citizens Barber Shop in Mountainair has completed the installation of a bathtub and lavatory and has been ready to fur-

nish baths to all comers, the connections having been completed on Christmas Eve. Sam Isenhardt has made various improvements since taking charge of the shop, but none more appreciated by the public than this. *Mountainair Independent*

Jan. 25, 1930

New Mexico's delegation attending the inauguration of President-elect Pascual Ortiz Rubio of Mexico on Feb. 5 will number close to 40 and possibly 50 people. In addition to Gov. Richard C. Dillon and a party of Santa Feans and a special party headed by Eduardo Otero, a total of 17 Albuquerque people will make the trip to Mexico City with a delegation of seven from Belen. *Santa Fe New Mexican*

(Readers interested in joining the Valencia County Historical Society should contact its president, Richard Melzer, at rmelzer@unm.edu)

group Cisne de Nuevo México.

Members of the group, based in Belen, range from children to adults and everyone in between. The classes are free of cost and open to everyone, as founder Rosa Sisneros-Jimenez began the group in 2021 with the intent of it being a community resource.

"More than anything, I think it's important to have a really good support system in the community, where you can engage with people and families while enriching the culture," she said.

Folklorico, as Sisneros-Jimenez explained, is not one single style of dance, but is an umbrella term for traditional dances from Mexico's different regions and states that emphasize local folk culture.

Sisneros-Jimenez said she was introduced to folklorico in elementary school where it is commonly featured as part of grade school curriculum in Mexico, where she was born and raised.

"Here, for fine arts in the school curriculum, they usually do music and art, but (in Mexico) they also incorporate traditional dances from kindergarten through sixth grade," she said.

After sixth grade, Sisneros-



Rosa Sisneros-Jimenez instructs a group of students at one of her recent dance classes. Sisneros-Jimenez said offering the classes is fulfilling as it brings joy to the community as well as the group members.



community who do have that Hispanic heritage to be able to continue that connection with their roots, and also for the people that are not part of the culture, they can join the culture in



ing, coloring-outside-the-lines ventures.

Mainstream is boring and stodgy, typical and expected. It's your uncle who's an accountant and gives you a pocket protector every Christmas. He likes mayonnaise sandwiches on white bread.

Mainstream is the death knell of creative thought and colorful murals. It's homeowner associations that declare your house can be any shade of beige you want.

The more I think about it, mainstream might be the worst thing ever. So it stands to reason, when we're called "mainstream media" we push back. No, we aren't normal or conventional or boring, right? We do cool, exciting, edgy, avant garde stuff all the time.

We go to city council meetings and county commission meetings. School board meetings. Planning and zoning meetings. OK, maybe the meetings aren't a good example.

I mean, who really wants to know what their local government is doing? What taxes and

Heaven THE HARD WAY



Sixty years ago this little German Lutheran church was the only Protestant church between Albuquerque and Socorro.

By *Veda Neville Conner*

MY MOTHER used to tell how, for a few terrifying moments fifty years ago, she thought she'd ruined both herself and Billy Sunday's preaching suit. In her little Illinois town she'd spent weeks in frenzied preparation for the world-famous evangelist's visit. Then she shook a dirty rug down on his head as he passed in the street below.

She remembered in a flash tales of his fiery explosive temper and she wished wildly she'd been born Catholic instead of Methodist so she could go into a convent. But the square-faced man below only smiled benignly up to her through the dust, tipped his derby and passed on.

My mother little dreamed in her sedate, gas-lit, coal-ranged comfort of how her young contemporaries out in Belen, Territory of New Mexico, would have sniffed at calling that a catastrophe. Theirs was a frontier town in the Rio Grande Valley, and though its name might be Spanish for Bethlehem, their struggles were such that it often seemed a pretty unholy place.

In their isolation, church women of the Territory were at least fifty years behind their eastern sisters, and Billy Sunday himself was only a distant rumor to them.

They were more concerned with some student-preacher at hand and how to pay him and build a church for him to preach in. And at a time when it hadn't rained on the corn or cattle for two years.

They coped with 100-miles-an-hour dust storms or blizzards fresh and strong from the Rockies on their nights of long-planned festivities. They knew raucous cowboys, tough railroad builders, puzzling Indians, bad gunmen. And there were the big, important, heart-wearying things: piñon wood cut too long for balky church cookstoves, canned milk that froze, kerosene lamps that smoked. And they'd have given it all up as quickly as they'd have given up their hope of Heaven.

In fact, forty-odd years ago in a Belen of less than a

Building the cut-off route saved the day for Ladies' Aid president and secretary, Mrs. Laura Becker and Mrs. Clara Dalies.



thousand people, thirty women would come to Methodist Ladies' Aid meeting by buckboard, buggy or on horseback from miles around, whereas eight may show up today. It was their recreation.

That recreation took on added zest in the Rio Grande Valley town, the winter of 1910. For the young minister, Guy Cox, a health-seeker, had almost alone built a little *adobe* brick church complete with seats and pews. Mrs. P. P. Simmons, president, and her Ladies' Aid had never had a church before.

When Mrs. Simmons, then Fairy Virginia Pryde, came from Kansas in 1894, ox teams had sludged through mud or sand past a tiny *adobe* church near the Goebel store. This was the German Lutheran church, only Protestant church between Albuquerque and Socorro.

Mr. Simmons was clerk at John Becker's store, and the Becker, Scholle and Goebel families warmly welcomed them to the Lutheran church. But it wasn't the same. Fairy Virginia wistfully watched black-shawled Spanish ladies saunter past to ladies' affairs at mellowed *Nuestra Señora de Belen*. They'd been all set since 1793.

Then Methodist Reverend Ruoff began riding in from Mountainair, saddlebags bulging with communion and christening paraphernalia. Church and parsonage were the home in which he hung his wide-brimmed hat. There were four or five Methodist families there by then, Simmons, Campbell, Byers.

Eastern missionary money was likely to be sent out first to places with names known to Home missionaries. By the time any got to little Bethlehem, New Mexico, it was almost sure to be a tiny trickle that would scarcely water a preacher's vegetable garden.

It's a mystery what pale, slender Guy Cox lived on while he built the church in 1909-10, but when it was finished, Missions upped their contributions a little. The ladies were so grateful they rashly promised \$300 a year plus a \$50 monthly salary for him. To make it worse, the old organ wheezed its last wheeze and the women said, sure, they'd get a piano too.

It all added up to about the limit in paid entertainment Belen could absorb that winter of 1910: sales, mock weddings, chicken pie suppers, bazaars.

The money didn't exactly roll in, but the ladies' faith was as bountiful as their numbers. They felt what they couldn't provide the Lord would. And the night of the chicken pie supper proved it.

The last hungry customer had been fed only by scraping the last crispy brown bits from the last of the pans keeping warm around the big wood-burning heating stove. (There was no room in a 150-seat church for a cook-stove.) The women, mentally counting their profits, were carrying dessert plates to a tired but chattering dishwashing crew behind a screen. The front door burst open and into the lamplight



In 1922 the Lutheran Church combined with other denominations to build the Belen Federated Church.

rushed what seemed like a hundred railroad men in off their run—there were actually twenty-five—joshing, scraping and rumbling into chairs, looking confidently at the stricken women and banging cheerfully on the tables for chicken pie.

Out of the flutter of women, stepping over each other in aimless activity, came the frantic whisper: "The boardinghouse! Mrs. Dils said she'd have chicken pie tonight just in case. Do you suppose—?"

A young blade with a horse and buggy tied out in front of a saloon was horrified when he was suddenly enjoined by a disheveled Mrs. Simmons: "You get out to that boardinghouse. If there's chicken pie, you bring it. And don't spare that horse!"

The ladies poured glass after glass of water, rattled pots and pans vigorously, and took stealthy turns at the back door listening for hoof beats and buggy wheels in the night.

Then the boardinghouse lady—and the Lord—came through.

Guy Cox, still seeking health, went to Arizona, but his little church is the heart of today's Belen Methodist church, built snugly (Continued on Page 50)

The Belen Methodist Church encircles the tiny *adobe* mission built by young Guy Cox in 1909.



ALBUQUERQUE

Processors and Manufacturers

"NEW MEXICO'S OLDEST
AUTOMOBILE DISTRIBUTOR"

GALLES MOTOR

Chevrolet • Oldsmobile • Cadillac
Ph. 3-5686 — Albuquerque, N. M.

New Mexico's Most Experienced Movers

BENTON
Van & Storage
Albuquerque, New Mexico

SOUTHWEST ENGINEERS

Municipal
Waterworks
Sewerage



Consultants
Electrical
Paving

DESIGN — REPORTS — APPRAISALS
Korber Bldg., Albuquerque, N. M.
Phone 7-1583

Don't Move

until you get house-
hold goods storage and hauling rates
"Across the street or across the nation."

DALTON

TRANSFER & STORAGE CO.
105 Central Ave. NE Albuquerque, N. M.

RIO GRANDE STEEL PRODUCTS COMPANY, INC.

Quality, Immediate Service Reasonable Prices
Engineers and Reinforcing Steel Specialists
P. O. BOX 477 PHONE 3-5433
1710 6th St., NW Albuquerque, N. M.

We are proud to have a part in
Albuquerque's specialized services in
New Mexico

TELLYER Concrete Pipe Co.

South 2nd St., Albuquerque, N. M.

FABRICATED STRUCTURAL STEEL
REINFORCING STEEL
MACHINE REPAIRS
GREY IRON CASTINGS
NONFERROUS METAL CASTINGS
PULLEYS—SHAFTING, HANGERS
ALBUQUERQUE FOUNDRY
AND MACHINE WORKS
637 Broadway SE — Albuquerque, N. M.

RUBBER STAMPS

ACCESSORIES
NOTARY AND CORPORATE SEALS
Mail Orders Promptly Filled

Southwest Rubber Stamp Co.
201 Copper Ave. NW, Albuquerque, N. M.

Heaven the Hard Way

(Continued from Page 25)

around it.

The east-west cut-off railroad route came in 1903 and joined Belen to the main line of the Santa Fe that circled west, north of town. It brought in people and money and benefited church treasures. It almost brought the Methodists the shame of being advertisers without the goods. It was to prove a blessing to Lutheran ladies in distress in 1910. But that cut-off always was a blessing or a curse, according to how you looked at it.

Rough laborers, the inevitable professional gamblers, rollers and gunmen came with it. In 1903, before she married Louis C. Becker, First National Bank cashier, and became president of the Lutheran Ladies' Aid, Laura Zinth worked on the John Becker books every night until nine. Then she walked a trembling gamut of thirteen saloons to her sister Clara Dalies' house, gun in pocket. High adventure for a girl from sober Wisconsin.

A few of the railroad workers and some of the cowboys in from vast cattle and sheep ranches were pretty well-mannered on occasion. In stiff-collars and polished-boots, they'd sidle in to a Lutheran box supper in the farther end of town from the saloons' tinny pianos. There they would suddenly and shyly bid ten dollars on a box of fried chicken, crusty homemade bread and angel food cake not worth a penny over seventy-five cents. Cold food, tied up in rare cardboard boxes with rarer ribbon, was a dodge for the church women, easier to negotiate than hot foods and moving seats around in a 2 x 4 church.

The Belen Lutheran ladies, like the Methodists, managed to have church activities before they ever had a church. Services were being held in 1885, and their church was built in 1894. Also like the Methodists, they had a night when the cut-off figured largely in a church supper. But their dilemma was the reverse—with not enough customers and too many oysters.

This supper was an annual affair and one of the biggest events of the social season for Belen and surrounding Rio Grande country—and a shot in the arm of about \$200 to the ladies' strong box.

In those days oysters were ladled wet and dripping from kegs in which they'd been railroaded across a continent from some eastern bay.

An east wind from the Manzanos was already beginning a mournful howl and specks of snow were dotting the grey February sky when Mrs. Laura Becker, president, and Mrs. Clara Dalies, secretary, and their Ladies' Aid began carrying supplies into the Heyday Club building. Their *adobe* church was far too small for such an affair. They lugged dozens of oil lamps, water, piñon wood, silver, bowls and soup kettles, pounds of dime-sized oyster crackers, cans of condensed milk.

By the time all was in, long skirts and petticoats had to be wrung out and flapped dry by the hot stove. For the wind, beating across the sand flats and around the *mesas* of unprotected Belen, carried a freezing mixture of sand and snow.

Miss Bertha Rutz, who had opened a hotel when the building of the cut-off began, presided with authority of an inn-keeper over the oysters, frying some in puffy brown balls. When she announced the stew was ready to serve, snow was driving to mountainous drifts. Operation blizzard was battering the town like nothing in years.

You can't turn back, not with gallons of oysters in the hold that will have an odor all their own this time tomorrow come a

thaw. The ladies waited, they hardly knew what for. They wandered disconsolately into the salesroom with its big table of white elephants. No one would have bought the discarded pincushions, paper roses, plaster statues and the like, but sad smiles fell on what the ladies had hoped would bring gay laughter.

Little crowds of townspeople puffed in, red and cold, to look sympathetically at the ladies and hungrily at the stew. They well knew the women didn't depend on *them* but on crowds from Tomé, Peralta, Los Lunas, the Valley.

But a long line of bunkcars sat over in the



BASE BOARD — SUN — PANEL
TRIAD HOT WATER HEATING

SPACE SAVING—Triad Sun-Panel baseboard is neat; an attractive addition to the home. Ideal for hot water heating. RADIANT HEAT—Clean, draft free heat from floor to ceiling. Built to resist damage from ordinary use.

REFRIGERATED COOLING—At additional cost it can be included in this installation for year around heating and cooling. Automatic controls for correct temperature.

LOW COST—\$850.00 for 1000 sq. ft. home. Cooling unit for \$1000.00 additional.

Manufacturer's Direct Representative

205 Carlisle Blvd. SE Phone 5-9361
ALBUQUERQUE, N. M.



A friendly
service to all the
great southwest.

dark snowy yards of the newly built railroad. Some section man yelled to stragglers in the snow: "What goes?" "Oyster stew," came back the muffled cry.

Ladies leisurely dipping stew for a handful of quiet customers and sadly munching fried oysters suddenly found themselves unable to fill brimming bowls fast enough for men who'd been swinging sledge hammers in the cold all day. Bottoms of big kettles were soon looming up. But by then a stranded traveling man from the hotel had discovered the white elephants and was holding a loud hilarious auction in the next room. Rail-roads joined in to bid on—and buy—every

jimcrack in the room at shameful scalpers' prices.

Exhausted, happy church ladies jogged home behind weary horses through a clearing night to the jingle of \$500 in cold cash in the till.

Clara's husband, Paul Dalies, told them they didn't know trouble. When he'd come to Socorro in 1889, they were still talking about how gunmen had shot up the newspaper editor in the Methodist Church nine years before. He'd fallen dead in the doorway while the church ladies had been standing around congratulating themselves on a perfect Christmas Eve party.

He'd also seen the Belen Lutheran Church built in 1894 with adobe blocks for seats. It was a school also, and church ladies, like the pupils, brought their loads of wood for the stove when they held meetings or other affairs, carried out ashes, and swept out the place. Reverend Mathieson, Presbyterian circuit-rider of the Rio Grande Valley, included this Lutheran Church in his preaching itinerary.

When the new church was dedicated in 1911, the little church was made into a house. An addition had to be built on to make it big enough. The cupola, sans bell, was set out back of it. Although the house still stands, a bathroom was eventually installed in it, and the cupola is no more.

Paul Dalies, the John Becker clerk, is today vice-president of the company and Louis C. Becker is president of his bank. P. P. Simmons recently retired as Becker-Dalies vice-president.

Among surviving church women who recall those times of challenge—and of laughter—are Laura Becker, Fairy Simmons, Alice Campbell, Lottie Byers. They insist Belen's unusually wide streets came about through things remembered.

One such memory was a dark and moonless night around forty-five years ago. A little church lady started down the sandy wagon road to a church bazaar. She carried a fancy, homemade apron to be sold—she hoped. She never arrived.

Buying and selling were going on briskly when two of the women could stand their anxiety no longer. If a woman didn't show up for anything so exciting as a bazaar, something was seriously amiss.

Donning shawls, they picked their way down the dark lumpy road, slowing every few steps to listen. Then came soft scurrying, and whimpering sounds, ahead. Coyotes? They stopped dead. There, somewhere close by in the darkness, was the missing church lady, scrambling all over the sides of the irrigation ditch she'd fallen into. She was wailing: "I can't find my apron!" Mrs. Simmons still puzzles: "I don't know why she missed the road. She had her lantern."

Apron and lantern, fitting symbols for women who so long ago in Bethlehem sought Heaven the hard—and happy—way.

The FIRST NATIONAL BANK of Santa Fe



Oldest
Bank
in
the
Southwest



SANTA FE LOS ALAMOS
MEMBER . . . F. D. I. C.



MG SPORTS
"THE WORLD'S MOST
POPULAR SPORTS CAR"
RILEY • MORRIS • ROVER
• HILLMAN MINX •
• SUNBEAM TALBOT •

Earl Sanders
S-P MOTORS, INC.
7707 CENTRAL W
ALBUQUERQUE
Importers of Fine Precision
Built Automobiles

Clinton P. Anderson AGENCY

General Insurance
Fidelity and Surety Bonds
113 Third Street SW
Albuquerque, New Mexico



TRAVELITE & KITS

The Most Modern Trailers on the Road!

- Selection of Floor Plans
- Greater Storage Space
- 22 to 41 feet—All Metal

BANK RATES — Delivered Anywhere
in the State for Your Convenience

DEVINE'S TRAILER SALES

7620 Central SE, Albuquerque, N. M.
901 North Main, Roswell, N. M.
621 West Main, Farmington, N. M.

SPRINGER TRANSFER CO.

121 Tijeras Ave. NE Albuquerque, N. M.
P. O. Box 572

Sand and Gravel
Products

Carload Shipments on One-Hour Notice

J. H. RYAN & SON

General Contractors

PHONE 2-6373

Box 513, Albuquerque, N. M.

WILSON & CO.

• Engineers •

Murray A. Wilson

Harry H. Connell

E. C. Axline

Salina, Kans.
223 N. Santa Fe

Albuquerque, N. M.
1841 Lomas Blvd. NE

DRIVE RIGHT IN...

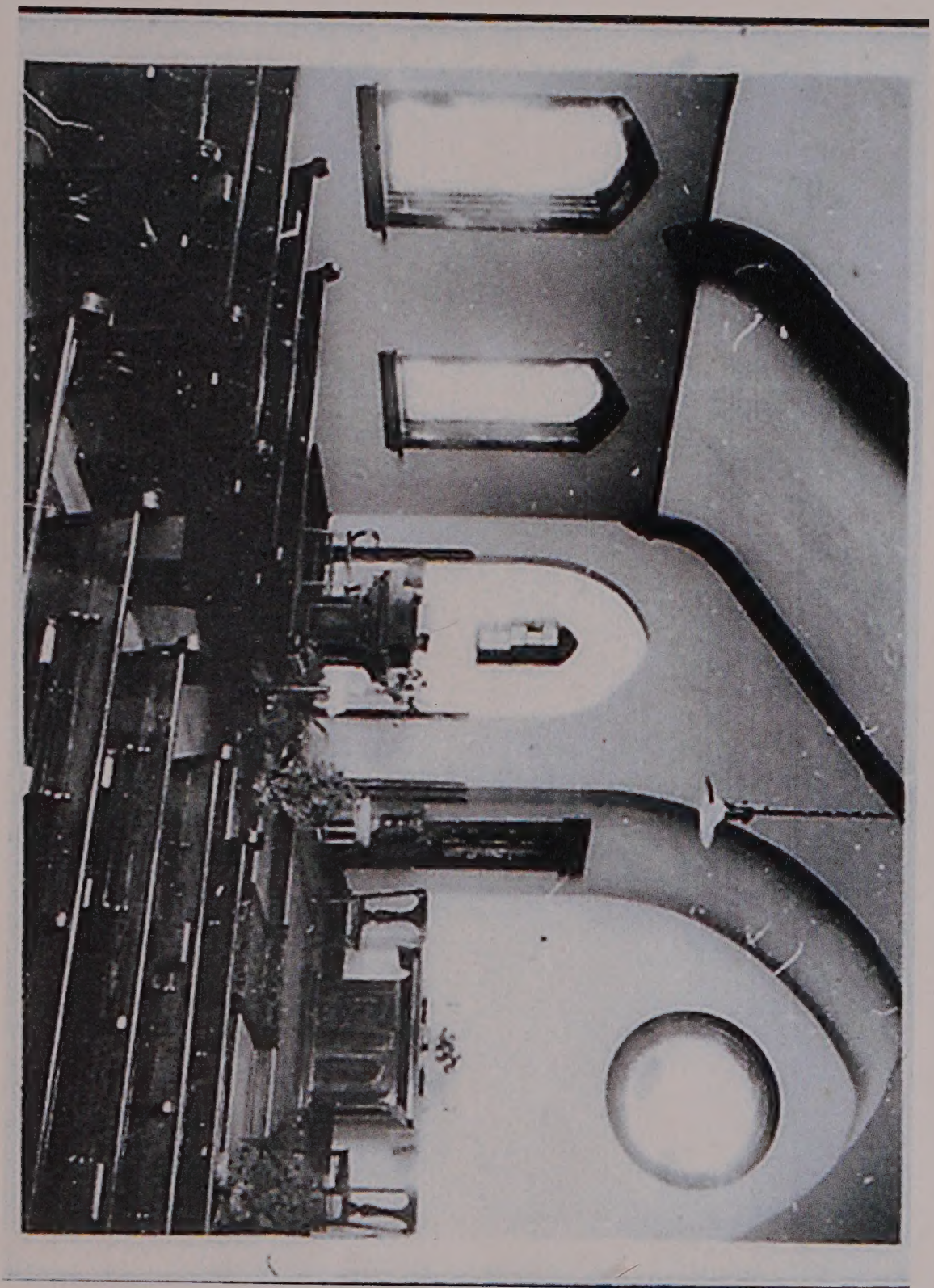
park your car
indoors where it's
easily accessible
day and night
just off the
main lobby.

HEADQUARTERS FOR
FRIENDLY SERVICE



FRANCISCAN
Hotel

CENTRAL at 6th • ALBUQUERQUE, N. M.



Interior of Early Lutheran Church Belknap N.M.

FAMILY _____
GENERAL _____
SPECIAL _____

Valley Lutheran Church
Hwy. 47

Name Valley Lutheran Church

Address _____

Phone # 865-4516 (Ida Nelson)

Submitted by: Rev. Paul W. Blankenbush

Caption: 1) History of Valley Lutheran Church,

2) _____

3) _____

Photo log # G-68, G-69, _____, _____,

Priority Photo _____

Returned to: PIX to Return

(Signature)

(Date)

Special Information:

1/2 47.50

Ida Nelson can read
not Paul yet

use 1 pix

Where is Pix to
Slide - 1 to
other side

Valley Lutheran

FAMILY Abeysa, Arthur

GENERAL 1911-Lutheran Church, Belen

SPECIAL

Name Arthur Abeysa

Address 135^{10th} st. Belen, N.M. 87002

Phone # 864-8044

Submitted by: _____

Caption: 1) _____

2) Later called: Federated Church

3) Later called: Presbyterian

Photo log # _____, 1996: Presbyterian

Priority Photo S.W. Corner: Anna Becker Park

Returned to: Across Street from Park.

(Signature)

(Date)

Special Information:

Arthur Abeysa



44979

Page #

G-68

File #

Oct 14 1948
Box 4
Fox

G-68

"Caption"
Kander Construction
Valley Lutheran
Fox
July '74

Use for their history

Ida Nelson
Route 5 Box 804
Los Lunas, N. Mex. 87031

865-9516

